

the things that makes it hard, because you are projecting out and the science is not just perfect itself.

But I will make almost a plea to the other side of the aisle: We have a week. The stakeholders, the people who are affected, the various constituents—they know because I said months ago that we were going to do this—are around this week. If it is an argument over whether I personally haven't spent enough time with either the Democratic leader or others, we will spend the time. The stakeholders are here. Senator SPECTER spent so much time and he has done a tremendous job. Senator HATCH has. And Democrats and Republicans.

Why don't we take this week, which I set aside weeks ago and said we were going to have a week—let's put everybody in a room. There are rooms here in the Capitol right now—right now. Take some Democrats, take some Republicans, take mediators, take Judge Becker, take our staff—us. There are rooms right now.

Again, I said starting yesterday we have 5 days to resolve the problem. In truth, each one of these issues—this particular bill people worked on 360 days. It was marked up in the committee before. It has been improved again with Democratic and Republican input. It can be improved more.

I have told everyone from day one the modifications Senator HATCH, I, and others have made with input of labor and others are still not perfect, but until we bring it to the floor of the Senate or until right now, today, over the next 8 hours today, 12 hours tomorrow, 12 the next day, and 12 the next day, I am convinced we can resolve the differences. All this talk about being excluded from meetings or not, we have rooms in the Capitol; the "person" power is here. People are prepared to debate. As I said in my opening statement, nobody is stuck on particular clauses or amounts.

I suggest—and that is a reason I called this morning, about 10 minutes before we started; I knew he was in the leadership meeting—over the course of today we figure out a process by which we can come to resolution of the problem we all know exists, that we have bipartisan support on fixing, have some process outlined. I would say we start today because I said 2 weeks ago it would be this week, that we would take a week, so this is no surprise. I went through my statement. I was on the floor of the Senate November 22, March, April, the day before we left. I told everybody it would be this week. People are here—if they are not here, they can get here by tomorrow—to sit down and go through the issues.

I respond to the Democratic leader's comments that we have a shot. We have a responsibility of addressing this issue. We only have 79 legislative days left. To put this off further is not going to be the way to do it. We need to start to put our heads together and put together a process to do that and fix the system we know has run amok.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. I am pleased the majority leader came back to the floor to reiterate his desire to find a solution. It will take more than just reasserting over and over that we want to find that answer, that compromise, that legislative approach that will generate the kind of support in the Senate that is possible.

It takes what he just said. It will take a willingness to meet, a willingness to work through these issues. That is my frustration. I truly believe the majority leader is sincere when he says he wants to find a way to solve the problem.

What I don't feel has been done, except in the offices of the good Senator from Pennsylvania, is that concerted effort to try to address these issues in an inclusive way. That has been done, but it has been done in large measure by Senator SPECTER, not by the leadership.

We are prepared today, tomorrow, tonight. We will be happy to meet, as I have offered to do on many occasions. The sooner we do it, the sooner that opportunity for resolution can be achieved.

I yield the floor.

Mr. FRIST. If the Democratic leader will yield for a question, if we start right now and we work through today, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday on issues we debated and talked about—a lot of people are a lot more expert than me—why can't we do that? Why can't we resolve this huge problem? If we send it off to never-never land for an unlimited period of time, this will not come back. I know that. This is the fourth date I have set as a final date that we will come in just for consideration, so we can get on the bill. Even if we were on the bill, talking about the merits of the bill, debating it, we can be having discussions with Democrats and Republicans. I ask that Senator LEAHY and Senator HATCH also be in the room as well.

Now is the time. Now is the time for action. Would that be possible?

Mr. DASCHLE. If the Senator is asking me a question, I respond by saying, absolutely. But let me give him one illustration of my skepticism about his question.

There must have been now, as he said, 20—maybe more—staff meetings over the course of the last 6 or 8 months. As he and I discussed this matter and as our staffs discussed this matter, attention has turned to the compensation trust fund. We were absolutely startled, surprised, deeply troubled by this remarkable movement away from the trust fund number the committee had included: \$153 billion. The pending bill has \$109 billion.

My staff and I have both asked staff of the majority leader on several occasions, Is there a way to find a reasonable number? We have been stonewalled every single time when that issue has been discussed. It has

not been discussed. It is not even discussable on the other side.

It does not do any good to sit and look across each other at the table if we cannot have a meaningful discussion about some of the differences we have. If all we do over the course of the next week is to say this is our number, with some expectation that maybe by saying it 100 times we will concede that then has to be the number, this will be one of the most fruitless experiences he and I will have had in our time in the Senate.

So yes, there has to be a willingness to meet; but if those meetings have meaning, there also has to be willingness to negotiate. Frankly, we have not seen much of that except in the Specter meetings. Again, I am hopeful we can finally move off these hard positions and find some common ground. If that can be achieved, then, yes, I think this week could be a productive week.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I think we need to get on to our morning business as we go forward. Hopefully, our colleagues have seen this play out. Both the Democratic leader and I are committed to this. We will have to have a process to get through it. I am absolutely convinced we can do it this week if we get the appropriate process. He and I will talk, the leadership will talk, and talk to the relative parties over the course of the day. I hope by the end of the day we will figure out what the process will be that would be fair and appropriate negotiation, to come to a resolution for the American people.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the period of the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with the first 30 minutes of time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee, and the final 30 minutes of time under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I understand I am recognized for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Fifteen minutes.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I say to my friend from New Jersey I will not take that long.

#### CONGRATULATIONS TO CHERI BLAUWET FOR WINNING WOMEN'S WHEELCHAIR DIVISION OF BOSTON MARATHON

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I want to talk about the news this morning about the issuance of the proposed final rules on overtime. Before I do that, on a more happy note, I note that an Iowan, of whom we are all very proud, Cheri Blauwet, from Larchwood, IA, crossed the finish line of the Boston Marathon yesterday in 1 hour 39 minutes 53 seconds to win first place on the